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Analyzing student feedback : a case study of the new evening degree program at UNI

Abstract

This paper is a case study of student feedback in relation to the new Evening Degree Program at the University of Northern Iowa. This program was instituted in the Fall 1995 semester. The Evening Degree Program is structured to allow one to earn a degree solely by attending classes in the evening. There are currently 19 undergraduate majors from which to choose, 10 minors, 24 graduate majors, and a certificate program.

The comments fell into specific areas such as admissions, academic advising, counseling, support services, programming, or some other area of need. The comments are grouped and then discussed. The categories are: gender, graduate and undergraduate, and geographical place of residence. A summarization of the comments is included as well as recommendations made to help in meeting the needs of this diverse group of students.

ANALYZING STUDENT FEEDBACK:
A CASE STUDY OF THE NEW
EVENING DEGREE PROGRAM AT UNI:

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Department of Educational Administration
and Counseling
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

by
Gary L. Bergen
August 1996

This Research Paper by: Gary L. Bergen

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Degree Program at UNI

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree of
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Date Approved

Michael D. Waggoner

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Today's students represent an increasing diversity in higher education.

Most recent statistics indicate that the average age of the U.S. student collegiate population is higher than the comparable group twenty years ago. One half of all college students are women. An increasing percentage of students are adults and attend part-time. The traditional student, age 18 -22, is declining in enrollment numbers (Commission on National Challenges in Higher Education 1988, p. 16, cited in Jacoby, 1989). College students are getting older. In an era of maturing faces and graying hair, little is really known about the student population for most institutions of higher education to begin making necessary accommodations in programs, policies, and procedures.

Who are these students?

There have been significant changes in the demographics of college students in the past ten years. From 1972 to 1984, the total number of students age 25-29 increased 51.1%, while there was an increase of 118.1% in the number of students age 30-34. By gender, this represented an increase of 13.8% for men age 25-29 and 134.1% for women. Even more striking was an increase of 59.7% for men age 30-34 and 215% for women in that same age group (Bodensteiner, 1989).

Today, more than 49% of the student body in the United States is over 25 years of age and 60% of these students are women. Of the total students attending

institutions of higher education in the fall of 1987, 21.2% of all full-time students and 66.8% of all part-time students were over the age of 24. In 1991, only one in seven students in U.S. higher education attended full-time and were in residence on campuses (Jacoby, 1989). The percentage of adult learners (those 25 or over) will continue to rise, and could become the majority of enrolled students on campuses within the next decade (Moore, 1990).

Characteristics of the adult learner

Characteristics should really begin with a clarity of terms. One definition of "adult learner" is a person who (1) has been absent from formal, full-time education for at least four years, or (2) is a veteran of the military, or (3) is at least 25 years of age, or (4) is married, widowed, divorced, separated, providing for a child or supporting a dependent (Post, 1990/1991, cited in Post & Killian, 1992, 1993). Adult learners have also been referred to as non-traditional. Clearly, the adult student fits well in the classification of students as commuters--those who do not live in institution-owned housing. This group accounts for over 80% of the students in U.S. colleges and universities (Jacoby, 1989).

A wide range of general characteristics separates the adults and non-traditional student group from the traditional (18-24 age group) resident student. Adults are career-focused, willing to work hard to master learning they feel is useful, and demand quality instruction for their dollars. In addition, adults are

prompt and regular in attendance, more self-directed, achievement-oriented, and tend to handle several competing responsibilities such as family, job, and school (Jacoby, 1989).

Reasons for returning

Studies in the 1960s said women returned or re-entered the first time because they were bored. The 1970s attributed a return to school as a desire for personal growth. By the 1980s, career aspirations became predominant (Mercer, 1993). For men, the reasons were more basic and remained much the same as in earlier years: to update job skills or to enhance existing opportunities for promotion.

Current down-sizing of many large corporations across the U.S. reminds us constantly that life changes can occur rapidly and dramatically. The military is experiencing cutbacks and closing many bases. Most of the military personnel are not effectively prepared for civilian employment. Prison overcrowding is so great that only the more dangerous can be retained; others are released with little if any specialized training. In addition to large scale societal demands that affect groups, other events such as marriage, divorce, empty-nest syndrome, promotion, death, or unemployment are more individual in their impact. The societal demands and life-changing transitions present opportunities for individuals at a time when they may be most receptive to change. Whatever the reason for change in their lives,

education may be the difference between success and failure. As the pace of change accelerates and diversifies, so most adult (non-traditional) education becomes more creative and focused on meeting the various needs of those persons in transition (Tibbetts & Keeton, 1993).

Research and theory on adult development shows that the characteristics mentioned earlier differ in many ways from the traditional students, and these differences may require adapting and redesigning the traditional student services to meet the needs of this new adult age range of student. To do this, colleges and universities must first focus on the different service needs of the adult student.

This paper is a case study of student feedback in relation to the new Evening Degree Program at the University of Northern Iowa. This program was instituted in the Fall 1995 semester. The Evening Degree Program is structured to allow one to earn a degree solely by attending classes in the evening. There are currently 19 undergraduate majors from which to choose, 10 minors, 24 graduate majors, and a certificate program.

A telephone survey, using four different lists of students and prospective students was conducted over a full semester to determine: (1) those who wished to remain on the Evening Degree newsletter mailing list, and (2) if any of the students had positive or negative concerns regarding evening course work.

During the course of completing the calls, students began to offer additional comments, not only in reference to the program, but other concerns as well. Student feedback included comments such as: "I really enjoy going to class in the evening. It's so convenient when I am working full-time during the day," or "Because I'm paying my own way and live one hour's distance away, I really get upset when the class is dismissed 45 minutes to one hour early. I want my money's worth." These comments fell into specific areas such as admissions, academic advising, counseling, support services, programming, or some other area of need.

The comments will be grouped and then discussed. The categories are: gender, graduate and undergraduate, and geographical place of residence. A summarization of the comments is included as well as recommendations made to help in meeting the needs of this diverse group of students.

During the course of the fall semester 1995 and the first two weeks of the spring 1996 semester, 581 completed calls were made to students and prospective students. The names were taken from an Inquiry list, which resulted from marketing efforts advertising the new Evening Degree Program; an "Admitted Students" list (active students enrolled for the Evening Degree Program, a "survey" list which represented former students who had completed a spring 1995 survey, and currently enrolled students classified as "Evening Only" students.

TABLE 1: Composite of Students Surveyed

| Type of List | Total No. on List | Completed Calls | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Inquiry | 206 | 130 | 19 | 38 | 26 | 47 |
| Admitted | 48 | 27 | 12 | 10 | 1 | 4 |
| Spring '95 Survey | 143 | 75 | 9 | 27 | 15 | 24 |
| Evening Only | 639 | 349 | 42 | 71 | 71 | 165 |
| Totals | 1036 | 581 | 82 | 146 | 113 | 240 |

UM = Undergraduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female

GM = Graduate Male

GF = Graduate Female

Analysis of Table 1

More females than males responded to this survey. Graduate students outnumbered undergraduates. Almost 68% of the Evening only students contacted were graduate students. This fact leads one to speculate that our Evening Degree Program is designed for older, full-time working students or spouses of day-workers to attend in the evening then for first-time entrants into higher education.

Table 1 indicates that female students, whether graduate or undergraduate, are more than 60% of the population. This number correlates with current statistics prevalent at many colleges and universities today. Only one in seven students today is attending college full-time and in residence (Jacoby, 1992; Moore, 1990).

As I proceeded through the calling lists, I made a note as to the telephone number and addresses and found that only three students from the "Evening Only"

list resided in campus-owned housing. A much lower percentage (.008%) than the national average of what is normally termed as "residential" college.

(Bodensteiner, 1989)

Another significant item was the number of students taking classes at UNI from these lists, that resided out of town (Table 2).

TABLE 2: Residence of Students Surveyed and Living Off-Campus

| List | Local (Waterloo-Cedar Falls | Out-of-town |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Inquiry | 43 | 87 |
| Admitted | 19 | 8 |
| Spring '95 Survey | 48 | 27 |
| Evening Only | 210 | 139 |
| Total | 320 (55%) | 261 (45%) |

These two facts -- 99.2% of evening only students reside off-campus and that 45% of those live out of town -- should cause one to ask if they really know enough about the evening degree students to enable them to be organized and operationally efficient to meet the needs of the commuter students.

Among the questions that arise are these: Does the mission of the university reflect the goals and philosophy of both the institution and the students? Are materials and publications available that provide complete and accurate information to the students about basic services, student services, and campus life? Do the service fees for labs and health benefit the entire student population? Do our orientation programs make all students feel welcome on campus?

Does our scheduling of classes such as times they meet, days of the week (once or twice) accommodate all students? Are advisers and counselors trained and knowledgeable about the student population in relation to changing student development theories? Does our faculty and staff encourage an open-door policy in working with the non-traditional student who spends so little time on campus other than for class? Are support groups available for all students equally who may need them? Is financial aid distributed equally? Are security services, parking facilities, and child-care available? Are offices and faculty accessible equally to all students?

Student responses from the phone survey provided insight into a number of these areas. Organized into ten categories, each response was broken down, some representing comments for more than one category. In relaying this information, all comments were recorded in tables and just the numbers responding to the survey, along with a few representative comments for each category, were noted due to space and time limitations.

Evening Degree Program Environment

This represents the students' general concepts regarding the program as a whole, the institutions image, what goes on in and out of the classroom, and the services and experiences to which the student is exposed and interrelates.

Student comments on this topic included the following:

- 'I have mostly positive thoughts regarding the program.' (Undergraduate, male)

- 'The program allows one to continue working full time without making for special arrangements in getting off early. I feel its concept is beginning to show that UNI is trying to meet the needs of the students.' (Graduate, female with children)
- 'I work full-time so being able to attend in the evening is great. Hope the program continues so that others like me can be better served in the future.' (Graduate, male)

TABLE 3: General Comments Regarding the Evening Degree Program

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Evening courses are my only salvation. I work full-time during the day | | | 12 | 53 |
| Enables one to pursue advanced degrees and still work | | | 19 | |
| Convenient, makes attendance easier | 22 | 27 | 2 | |
| Program is Great, like taking courses at night | 21 | 6 | 8 | 16 |
| Very pleased about the night program. Feel real positive, likes the concept | 2 | 16 | | 23 |
| Felt the concept is trying to meet the needs of the students, but for those not working full-time, offices seem to follow a traditional path of operational policy. | | | | 13 |
| It's timely - program is needed | | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| It's beneficial and very interesting | 2 | | 1 | 10 |
| Program is excellent, a pretty good idea | 3 | | 9 | 1 |
| Hope the program grows | 7 | 1 | | 1 |
| Great service to students | | | 8 | |
| A positive experience | | | 8 | |
| Wonderful, am totally for it | | 2 | | 7 |
| Loves idea of obtaining degree in the evening | | | | 7 |
| Wish it would have started years ago | | | 1 | 5 |

UM = Undergraduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female

GM = Graduate Male

GF = Graduate Female

Table 3: Continuation of Comments

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|--|----|---------------------------|----|----|
| Like the smaller classes | | 6 | | |
| Both my husband and I can attend | | 5 | | |
| Did not receive all the literature regarding the program | | 4 | 2 | |
| Am hearing good things about the program | | | 2 | |
| Sounds good. Can't wait to transfer | | 1 | | |
| Pleased with the flexibility | | | 1 | |
| Very happy with class availability | | | 1 | |
| Likes the fact that students are older | | | | 1 |
| UM = Undergraduate Male | | UF = Undergraduate Female | | |
| GM = Graduate Male | | GF = Graduate Female | | |

Analysis of Table 3

The large number of responses for being able to attend class at night shows positive evidence of the changing student attendance needs. However, many feel that office hours for various student services are still not being met for the adult learner who works during the day.

Student Services

Educational planning, advising, and counseling are important for all students. These off-campus students are engaged in multiple life roles and need individuals who can assist them in their desired outcomes.

Examples of Comments

- 'I have difficulty with the available time slots for office hours of faculty and student services as well as the labs.' (Undergraduate female)
- 'Would like to see administrative and student services offices staying open at least part of the evening.' (Graduate male)

- 'My real concern is getting to the campus before the offices are closed (Business Office, Academic Advising, Registrar, etc.) (Graduate female)

Table 4: General Comments Regarding Student Services

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Need longer hours for Financial Aid Office, as well as other departments. | 5 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| Upper Iowa has a faster way to obtain degree | 1 | | | |
| Glad that someone called - never happened before | | 7 | | 7 |
| Little consideration for those students who travel long distances | | | 3 | |
| Daytime contact for help was very understanding, but cannot keep taking off work to see faculty and staff | | | | 1 |
| Spent several dollars in phone calls to reach adviser | | | | 1 |

UM = Undergraduate Male UF = Undergraduate Female
GM = Graduate Male GF = Graduate Female

Curriculum and Classes

The classroom is one sure opportunity that an institution has for interaction with commuter students. How the environment is handled is critical for motivational learning as these students strive to achieve their individual goals.

Examples of Comments

- 'I am in pre-engineering and very little is offered at UNI in my area in the evening.' (Undergraduate male)
- 'Am having a difficult time obtaining the class I need for Spring unless I restructure my day with my employer.' (Graduate male)
- 'My problem is there are classes that I've needed to be taken in sequence and they are dropped by the department.' (Graduate female)

Table 5: Curriculum Comments

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Looking forward to program expansion | | 6 | | |
| Courses I need are not available | 4 | | | |
| Program lacks sciences | 1 | 1 | | |
| Likes course flexibility | 1 | | | |
| Need a major in information systems | 1 | | | |
| Should be more functional changes | 1 | | | |
| Pre-MBA needs a structure like Iowa State | 1 | | | |
| Would like the MBA program to credit experience | 1 | | | |
| Like current starting times (4-7) | 1 | | | |
| Likes older student atmosphere | | 1 | | |
| Poor class schedules | | 1 | | |
| Can obtain Spanish degree | | 1 | | |
| Need broader courses/majors | | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| Disturbed by so many non-traditional students in class | | 1 | | |
| Will "Art" be available | | 1 | | |
| Looking for Computer Science degree | | | 1 | |
| Program needs more 2 credit courses | | | 1 | |
| Starting times of 6:30 too late for those travelling 1 hour or more | | | 1 | 1 |
| Classes I need are during the day. What do I do | | | 1 | |
| Would like to see interim courses between semesters | | | 1 | |
| Way to renew certification | | | | 1 |

UM = Undergraduate Male
GM = Graduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female
GF = Graduate Female

Table 5: Continuation of Comments

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|---------------------------|----|----|----|
| Disturbed that there are too many traditional students in class | | | | 1 |
| Some courses needed only offered in summer | | | | 1 |
| Problem concentrating in 3 hour long classes. Would prefer 2 nights 1 1/2 hours long | | | | 1 |
| UM = Undergraduate Male | UF = Undergraduate Female | | | |
| GM = Graduate Male | GF = Graduate Female | | | |

Analysis of Table 5

Even though the general comments were low for the area of Curriculum, the responses pin-pointed the need for broader course selection and an increase in the number of available majors.

Orientation

Transitions into institutions of higher learning are fast causing concern as well as appreciation for students and their families. Appreciation for Student Services, faculty and staff who share the genuine desire to demonstrate to students that they matter. Concern because many orientations conducted for those who return to college are generic. They are representative of the past. In other words, policies, procedures, and service explanations are still directed at the traditional student.

Example of Responses

- 'I felt that all orientation was going to do was to try and dispel any fears about returning to college.' (Undergraduate male)
- 'I received answers on the spot at Orientation.' (Undergraduate female)
- 'Orientation went so well that this is what "closed the sale" for me to return to school after 25 years.' (Graduate female)

Table 6: General Comments Concerning Orientation

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|--|----|---------------------------|----|----|
| Felt orientation was only aimed at dispelling fears of returning to college | 1 | | | |
| Was a big help | 1 | | | |
| Advising did a superb job | 1 | | | |
| Questions asked were answered promptly | 1 | 1 | | |
| Assistants at orientation were eager to be of help | | | | 1 |
| Felt time spent at orientation was good, but received little time with adviser | | 1 | | 1 |
| Orientation was refreshing | | 1 | | |
| Pleased that someone could review her transcript on the spot | | 1 | | |
| A treat not to have someone assume that all understand everything that is said | | 1 | | |
| Had to seek out several individuals at orientation before questions answered | | 1 | | |
| Felt orientation should take a harder "Sell" approach | | | 1 | |
| Orientation is what "Closed" the sale for me to return to school | | | | 1 |
| Need to have better explanations of Computer Lab and E-mail | | | | 1 |
| UM = Undergraduate Male | | UF = Undergraduate Female | | |
| GM = Graduate Male | | GF = Graduate Female | | |

Analysis of Table 6

The comments generally spoke to the positive effect of orientation for the student returning to college. Organizers of the orientation events are taking positive steps in facilitating students hereby reducing initial fears and apprehension

Satellite Centers/ICN

Example of Student Responses

- 'The driving distance is too great. Can't more courses be offered over ICN?' (Undergraduate female)
- 'I live in Decorah and am in Education Administration. I know there are at least 15 other educators that would prefer taking advanced work at UNI but the driving time eats up half the evening. Couldn't satellite learning centers be established?' (Graduate male)
- 'Would like to see off-campus learning center established in the Des Moines Area.' (Graduate female)

Table 7: General Comments Telecourses and Iowa Communications Network (ICN)

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|---------------------------|----|----|
| Wish more classes were offered closer to home | | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Upper Iowa is better for distance/cost | 1 | | | |
| A broader variety of tele-courses and correspondence courses needed | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Looking for classes (UNI) in Des Moines area | | 1 | | 1 |
| Any chance of off-campus centers? | | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| UM = Undergraduate Male | | UF = Undergraduate Female | | |
| GM = Graduate Male | | GF = Graduate Female | | |

Critique of Table 7

A much broader impact is made on graduate students in the usage of Satellite telecourses. Is it because most of these students are living out of town, or, are more familiar with distance education?

Weekend Classes

Examples of Student Responses

- 'I would like to see Saturday Classes expanded.' (Undergraduate male)
- 'The program is good, but my job schedule is up and down -- would prefer weekend classes.' (Graduate male)

- 'Weekend classes would allow me more flexibility to attend as I have a floating work schedule during the week.' (Graduate female)

Table 8: Saturday and Weekend Classes

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|--|----|----|----|----|
| Would like to see Saturday classes | 1 | | | |
| Program good - job schedule changes - would prefer weekend (Friday and Saturday) | 1 | | | 3 |
| Would like to see an expanded Saturday schedule | | 1 | | 2 |

UM = Undergraduate Male
GM = Graduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female
GF = Graduate Female

Financial Aid and Fees

Financial assistance in any form provides the institution with opportunities to integrate classroom learning with experiences. Financial aid is one of several factors that contribute to success in education. Some of the additional factors are employment, classroom learning, and integrative classroom discussions. These, along with financial aid, are critical for evening students, many of whom depend on employment and financial aid for continued enrollment.

Examples of Student Responses

- 'I like the idea, but it costs less at HCC (Hawkeye Community College).' (Undergraduate male)
- 'Cannot qualify for Financial Aid if I take less than 6 hours. This means I have to travel 90 minutes one-way twice a week for classes.' (Undergraduate female)
- 'I believe the mandatory health fees and the lab fees are ridiculous. Most adult students have their own computers and are also covered by their own or spouses insurance. Until this practice stops, I am no longer giving money to the Alumni Association.' (Graduate female)

Table 9: General Comments Regarding Financial Aid and Fees

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|--|----|----|----|----|
| Costs less at Hawkeye Community College | 2 | | | |
| Wartburg is less expensive | | 1 | | |
| Cost is too great | | 1 | | |
| Cannot qualify for aid with less than 6 hours credit | | 1 | | |
| Changes in Financial Aid Office regarding tele-courses and correspondence have made it difficult to obtain aid | | | 1 | |
| Do not like mandatory health fee and computer fees | | | | 3 |

UM = Undergraduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female

GM = Graduate Male

GF = Graduate Female

Analysis of Table 9

One of the most controversial areas involves mandatory computer and health fees, although very few of the students surveyed brought this up on their own. I'm sure this comment, if placed within a written survey, would create widespread debate.

Faculty and Staff

Creating community on a campus involves different individuals and departments, but feeling a part of the campus students need to know that there are people who appreciate their individuality.

Examples of Student Responses

- 'The instructions are very understanding; especially in arriving to class.'
(Undergraduate female)
- 'Feels that evening instructors are more enjoyable. I like the use of adjunct faculty (Business) who teach what they are applying on a daily basis.'
(Graduate male)
- 'I believe that a few faculty members should consider retiring as they still have a tendency to treat students like little kids.' (Graduate female)

Table 10: General Comments in Reference to Faculty and Classes

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Likes course content | | 1 | | 2 |
| Several times, evening faculty dismiss early - do not feel I'm getting my money's worth | | 2 | | 1 |
| Classes are sometimes held past normal hours | | | 1 | |
| Was told not to get MBA at same college as undergraduate work | | | | 1 |
| Even though class is in evening, much out of class work is required to be done during the day - hard to do when one works - seems as if UNI is still geared to traditional students | | 1 | | 1 |
| Instructors are knowledgeable and accommodating | 4 | 4 | 3 | 12 |
| Certain department secretaries rude | | | | 1 |
| Institutional Services should be operated and controlled to meet the needs of all students | | 1 | | 2 |
| Feels a few faculty should retire | | | | 1 |
| Sexist comments in one business class | | 1 | | |

UM = Undergraduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female

GM = Graduate Male

GF = Graduate Female

Analysis of Table 10

A review of the table reveals very positive performance by our faculty and a favorable attitude from the students for the instructors' desire to meet the needs of the students.

Parking and Services

Examples of Student Responses

- 'A real negative is parking.' (Undergraduate male)
- 'The services that are offered to day time students should be offered to to evening students as well.' (Graduate male)
- 'I do not like the idea of driving all the way to campus and not finding a place to park. Am also irritated that the college is wanting to take one of the better lots and put up a new building.' (Graduate female)

Table 11: General Comments in Reference to Parking and Services

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Hard time accessing the UNI computers from off campus - always busy | 1 | | | |
| Parking needs improvement | | 4 | 1 | 10 |
| Coming back to UNI because of advertising | | 1 | | 1 |
| Information and seminars still geared to traditional student | | | 1 | 1 |
| Did not receive requested information | | | | 2 |
| Classes not cancelled due to weather | | | | 1 |
| Bookstore closes too early, especially at start of each semester | | | | 1 |
| Security for those getting out of class late | | | | 1 |
| Services should be offered to all students equally | | | 1 | |

UM = Undergraduate Male
GM = Graduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female
GF = Graduate Female

Critique of Table 11

Parking continues to present problems. This continues to be an area of need for increasing demands of today's students since more students are commuting to campus.

Scheduling, Admissions, and Registration

Sound education depends on unique matches between the student's goals and the colleges desire and ability to provide a supportive environment.

Examples of Student Responses

- 'Need better coordination of courses offered and time's available.'
(Undergraduate male)
- 'I feel as if UNI did not want me to attend due to the low transfer credit.'
(Undergraduate female)
- 'I received my teaching certificate out of state. Because of Iowa requirements , I had to take 15 additional hours which to me was duplication, and then my certificate was limited to Secondary Special Education.' (Graduate female)

Table 12: General Comments in Reference to Scheduling and Admissions

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|---|----|----|----|----|
| Poor transfer credit | 1 | 1 | | 3 |
| Need better coordination of courses offered and times scheduled | 1 | | | |
| Wishes part-time student's grades were placed on Dean's list | | 1 | | |
| Trouble getting in to register | | | 2 | |
| Easy to work up a convenient schedule | | 3 | 1 | 3 |

UM = Undergraduate Male

UF = Undergraduate Female

GM = Graduate Male

GF = Graduate Female

Table 12: Continuation of Comments

| Comments | UM | UF | GM | GF |
|--|----|---------------------------|----|----|
| Cannot obtain credit for 12 hour endorsement | | | 1 | |
| UNI Doctorate in Education requires 50% more course work than at Drake -- transfers into more time and money | | | | 1 |
| Likes computer registration | | | | 1 |
| Likes mail-in registration | | 1 | | 1 |
| Dislikes scheduling times | | | | 2 |
| Hard time getting into classes when needed | | 6 | 2 | |
| UM = Undergraduate Male | | UF = Undergraduate Female | | |
| GM = Graduate Male | | GF = Graduate Female | | |

Analysis of Table 12

Favorable comments are made about the area of registration via mail and computer which facilitates the student as he/she puts together a class schedule. However, there are still negative areas such as transfer credit, endorsements, and closed classes.

Summary

Reviewing the comments given by the Evening Degree students, I would say that our faculty are certainly sincere in their efforts to instill a propensity to learn in the students as well as showing a sense of understanding and support for the students who already have been involved on a daily basis in multiple responsibilities.

Our institution, at times, still seems to be operating on the principle that we are a campus environment of traditional students. But UNI is beginning to make efforts in reaching out to the non-traditional commuter student. How is the institution doing this? It does this through delivery change that incorporates courses, times of offerings, and methods of instruction that relate to the responsiveness of older students. The institution also is using new and varied promotional materials that reflect a new emphasis on all students. The new Evening Degree Program is a prime example of extending the area of the education community to reach out to those students who desire to complete or even start their education at UNI. Our orientation programs also make every effort to respond to the needs of students of all ages and background helping make their transition easier and less confusing.

Recommendations to UNI for Students Enrolled in UNI's Evening Degree Program

What improvements can we begin to implement that will prepare the students of today and tomorrow to accomplish their goals in the education environment as well as the desire to succeed in their chosen field ?

Following are several suggestions based on the comments of the students surveyed.

- A. Analyze and develop a more comprehensive plan for parking for: faculty, staff, and day-time student as well as commuters.

1. Could designate specific areas centrally located for night students.
 2. Ease the process of writing tickets for someone who already has travelled a good distance, with time constraints, and can't find space to park with class time already upon them. (Jacoby, 1989)
- B. Consider a centralized area, possibly the student union, for a student services team to help evening students get their questions answered. A rotating staff, who've been cross-trained in several areas, could maintain the center at least until 7:00 p.m. (Warren, 1986)
- C. Study and develop a comprehensive plan for better utilization of the ICN as well as satellite learning centers so that students in distance clusters would not have to travel so far to get to class. Example : Look at the map, Figure 1. You will see several possible centers that could be set up, such as Decorah, Marshalltown, Independence, Cedar Rapids, and Des Moines.
- D. Analyze the way our Financial Aid is funded and channeled to students to see if we cannot creatively finance alternatives for tele-courses, correspondence, and those students who take less than 6 hours due to distance and time constraints, let alone family, job and study responsibilities. (Spratt, 1984)

E. Review the mandatory fees such as computer labs and health fees.

Most adult students already own computers and most are covered by their own or a spouse's insurance. Are the mandatory fees really benefitting all students equally?

How is UNI Meeting the Changing Student Needs?

- Special Orientation events for adult students are planned at various periods during the year at times convenient for students who work during the day. These orientations include information on how to begin enrollment, degree requirements, student service seminars for writing assistance, math help, and study skills.
- UNI now offers, in addition to registration for classes via mail, computerized scheduling at times convenient to the adult learner.
- Evening Financial Aid seminars are held each semester to assist students in preparing forms, answering questions on eligibility, and providing support on other financial matters.
- Expanded graduate and undergraduate degrees now offered through the Evening Degree Program.
- Parking permits could be obtained via mail.
- Several departmental and student service's offices now open some evenings. These include Academic Advising, Individual Studies, and the Writing Center.

As students pursuing higher education continue to become more diverse, and as these students attend a wider range of institutions, the institution's understanding of the student as commuter, as non-traditional, as adult learner, and their relationship to higher education is required to bring about necessary changes. Our current climate, as institutions of higher learning, seek "excellence" and are being held accountable for translating excellence into education outcomes for all students. Change requires effort and commitment on the part of the institution, but failure to respond effectively and comprehensively to the needs and educational goals of the students will make excellence almost impossible to achieve (Jacoby, 1989).

Part of our commitment as Student Affairs Professionals is to tie the changing developmental theories to the ever-changing student diversity. As more and more students commute to campuses of higher learning, and an increasing number of students take advantage of distance learning formats (cable, satellite centers, etc.) we need, as an institution, to rethink the possibility of not just taking education to the student, but our services as well.

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